

# SPECIAL EDITION POLICY BRIEF

## NACCTEP



SEPTEMBER 2005

SPECIAL EDITION

Special Edition Policy Brief of the National Association of Community College Teacher Education Programs

### Contents:

Community College Mission

Cost, Quality and Structure

Classification/Policy Issues

States with Community College  
Teacher Education Baccalaureate  
Degrees

Resources

This Policy Brief is developed by the  
National Center for Teacher  
Education of the Maricopa  
Community Colleges

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## The Community College Baccalaureate

### Introduction

Over the past decade, community colleges have begun exploring, as well as offering, the baccalaureate as a degree option in response to demands from today's students. In fact, as of July 2005 there were eight states that approved at least one community college baccalaureate program.

The question that is most often asked is why? Why are community colleges taking the extra step to offer four-year degrees? A policy paper by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) published in July 2004, explains the following:

*The rationale for community colleges to add baccalaureate degrees to their offerings can be explained from both a societal perspective and an institutional perspective. From a societal perspective, a key factor is meeting the need for a baccalaureate educated workforce. Insofar as community college students experience barriers which limit baccalaureate attainment, the opportunity for them to complete their baccalaureate at the community college could likely increase their income and their contributions to society.*

From an institutional perspective, an issue for the community college is that many of the occupations for which it has been providing education have, in recent years, elevated their entry requirements to the baccalaureate level. Thus, if the community college is to continue to be a major provider of graduates for these occupations, it is necessary for the community college to ensure students in these programs have the opportunity to obtain the necessary credential – a baccalaureate.

This policy brief will discuss where community colleges are today, the reasoning and perceived need behind the baccalaureate

movement, alternative methods in which it can be accessed, and quality, cost, and policy implications. This brief will also review community colleges that have successfully implemented teacher education baccalaureate degrees.

### The Community College Today

Community colleges today serve almost half of all undergraduates, equaling over 10 million people representing widely differing backgrounds, cultures, ages, nationalities, interests, and goals. In response to ever changing student and workforce needs, community colleges are constantly evolving, yet staying true to their mission to transfer students to four-year colleges, provide technical and occupational education, offer remedial education, provide training for business and industry, and fill community service and workforce needs.

Today there are over 1,173 public and independent community colleges nationwide. In addition to their ability to cater to the non-traditional student, community colleges are also known for their:

- **Location & Accessibility:** Many non-traditional students balancing family and work responsibilities along with their schooling find it difficult or impossible to commute long distances to finish their degrees on a four year campus located away from their communities.

- **Flexibility:** Working students are often unable to attend four-year institutions during the day when many traditional universities, which have traditionally catered to full-time students, typically offer classes. Community colleges are also more likely to offer evening and weekend courses.

Continued on page 2

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## NACCTEP Mission

To promote the community college role in the recruitment, preparation, retention, and renewal of diverse PreK-12 teachers and to advocate for quality teacher education programs in the community college.

- **Affordability:** Non-traditional students who are often ineligible for financial aid find the higher tuition and fees charged at universities a significant burden.

- **Responsiveness:** Older returning students often feel out of place in a classroom setting geared for younger students.

- **Learner-Centered Environment:** Having been out of school for years, many returning adults require refresher courses or tutoring support more typically found at a community college in order to be successful in their college coursework.

- **Faculty:** Community college faculty are attuned to the community and accustomed to meeting the needs of non-traditional students. Community college faculty, whose primary responsibility is classroom teaching, are typically more available to students than faculty at traditional universities who must balance research and writing responsibilities.

## Extension of the Community College Mission

As explained in the Education Commission of the States' (ECS) *Community College Baccalaureate Degrees: A Delivery Model for the Future*, many believe the baccalaureate degree is a logical extension of the community college mission. With the changing population demographics, increased demands for access and affordability, a changing job market that demands higher credentials and differing community and business expectations, there is now additional pressure in some locations and in some fields to expand the mission of the traditional community college — providing access to the baccalaureate degree.

Some however are concerned with mission creep. The Education Commission explains:

*The community college baccalaureate raises concerns, however, about the community college's ability to maintain its core two-year focus. "Mission creep," or the shift from the community college's original functions to a concentration on baccalaureate education, could leave a gap on the postsecondary landscape.*

*Such changes then could affect the community college culture, causing division among upper and lower division faculty on issues of workload, pay or emphasis on academic research versus applied and technical learning. Shifts like these could have a dramatic impact*

*on state goals such as meeting workforce demands for jobs that require 1-2 years of postsecondary training, increasing postsecondary access for underserved populations, or improving educational opportunities for welfare recipients.*

The Center for Community College Policy reviews this controversy further:

*The expansion in the community college mission has not been without controversy. While some see the extension of the community college into baccalaureate education as a natural and desirable evolution, many other educators and state officials express concern that community colleges don't have the resources to embark on this new mission or that there may be unintended consequences. From both inside and outside of the two-year college community many fear that by adding the baccalaureate degree, community colleges will dilute or even abandon the essential focus of their open-door mission and will exacerbate conflict and competition with existing baccalaureate institutions.*

## The Need

The community college baccalaureate degree relies on the assumption that the need exists for such a program. As stated by the Community College Policy Center, distinguishing between anecdotal evidence and a documented need requires a clear understanding of how current needs have been met and where there may be gaps. When considering this degree, several questions should be considered:

- Whose needs are being served by a community college baccalaureate?
- Is the need for increased baccalaureate access in particular degree areas or for advanced workplace training?
- Are those needs significant enough to warrant new responses?
- Can they be addressed through alternatives other than the baccalaureate?
- Which of the goals reflect public interest, which reflect institutional interests, and how do they relate to overall state needs?

The need for the baccalaureate at the community college level stems largely from accessibility issues, particularly in states where there are large regions without adequate service by four-year institutions.

Additionally, with the increasing number of high school graduates (the graduating class of 2008 is expected to be the largest in history), the continuing rise in the number of adults returning to continue their education, and the increasing number of jobs requiring training beyond an associate's degree, the community college with its convenient locations, historically low costs, flexibility, and history of meeting community needs might be the ideal place to offer the baccalaureate degree.

Other concerns such as the increased demand by non traditional students who are time and place bound, increased labor market demand in high demand fields (e.g., teacher education), demands for new kinds of baccalaureate degrees in applied and technical fields, and overcrowding on four-year campuses (with demands exceeding capacity and limited higher education resources), has lead some to believe the community college is a viable alternative.

Some communities not only need access to baccalaureate programs in general, but access to teacher education programs specifically. Like large urban areas, many smaller, rural communities are experiencing severe teacher shortages and find it difficult to recruit and retain new teachers. The attraction of a "grow your own" teacher education program that can prepare local residents to teach in the public schools has encouraged some community colleges to offer their own baccalaureate teacher education program.

## Research

According to *The Community College Baccalaureate: Emerging Trends & Policy Issues*, in 2002-2003 Floyd and Walker surveyed state directors of community colleges. When asked if one or more community colleges in their state were awarding baccalaureate degrees, two (Florida and Nevada) out of 33 states responded "yes," whereas almost 20 responded that a baccalaureate degree was being awarded through the university center model. In 2003, The Community College Baccalaureate Association (CCBA) sent surveys to 500 college presidents and received 101 responses. Although this yielded only a 20% return rate, results are useful for practitioners and policy makers. Key findings are as follows:

- Over half noted that community college-based baccalaureate programming is not completely understood by the states higher education community and policy makers.
- Almost half of the colleges offer some form of a baccalaureate degree on their own or in partnership.
- Over a third indicated that four-year institutions in their area are not meeting baccalaureate demand.
- More than one-third affirmed that the majority of their students do not transfer to four-year institutions because of geographical or financial barriers.
- Over two-thirds agreed that there are specific, high-demand career fields that require a baccalaureate and that currently the four-year institutions in their area are not meeting these demands.
- Over one-third affirmed that their faculty and staff have expressed interest in developing the capacity to offer baccalaureate programming on their campus.

## Cost, Quality and Structure

A potential unintended consequence of community colleges offering baccalaureate degrees in teacher education may be a change in the relationship between the two-year and four-year institutions. After years of state and local efforts aimed at improving alignment between sectors to ease student transitions, two-year and four-year institutions may perceive themselves as competitors rather than partners for students and funding. The competition for students and resources in teacher education may impact efforts in other academic disciplines still dependent upon cooperation and collaboration between lower-division and senior-level institutions.

Opponents of baccalaureate programs at community colleges argue that advocates are primarily seeking a means to increase enrollment and generate additional tuition and fee revenue. In Florida, legislation raised the cost of tuition and fees per credit hour for community college baccalaureate programs when compared to the tuition charged for associate degree programs, but it is still less than tuition charged at Florida state universities.

Continued on page 4

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A teacher education major earning a baccalaureate at a community college will pay more than their fellow student in an associate degree program, but less than an education major in one of the state's traditional four-year colleges or university teacher education programs. State higher education funding allocations are also impacted by community colleges becoming baccalaureate-offering institutions. Recognizing that it generally costs more to deliver upper-division courses, universities have traditionally received a higher rate of state reimbursement per full-time equivalent student. In addition, field-based coursework usually costs more to deliver than classroom-based lecture courses. How these increased costs are balanced and funded for emerging community college teacher education programs is a significant concern.

Teaching loads and faculty expectations are significantly different at two-year and four-year institutions. Teachers at community colleges typically teach 15 hours, while four-year college and university faculty typically carry a nine to twelve hour teaching load, because they are required to conduct research and other scholarly activities. Opponents of community college teacher education baccalaureate programs have raised concerns whether community colleges will be able to provide the level of quality instruction and content needed in upper-division education courses. They question whether community colleges have the breadth of upper-division arts and sciences courses needed by teacher candidates preparing to be middle school and high school teachers. This is less of an issue in the preparation of elementary teacher education majors because the subject matter required is typically found in lower division courses, commonly offered at community colleges.

Complying with accreditation requirements mandated by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) could affect costs for faculty and libraries. Upgrading laboratories and equipment to meet baccalaureate institutional needs also could require substantial investments. Advocates argue that, by using existing resources, faculty, support services and facilities to expand access to four-year degrees, the community college baccalaureate ultimately could save tax dollars.

Many postsecondary education structures in the states have been based on the distinction between offering two-year or four-year degrees. The community college baccalaureate blurs the lines around those differences, potentially requiring changes in state laws, governance, program approval, funding formulas, and financial aid.

### Classification Issues

Placing community colleges that offer baccalaureate degrees into already existing classifications is posing a definitional problem. For example, some regional accreditation associations classify institutions based on the highest degree that the institution awards. Therefore, even if a community college offered only one baccalaureate degree, it would be identified as a four-year institution. In fact, some colleges have been forced to drop "community" from their names due to this classification. However, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) identifies community colleges that offer mostly associate degrees but also some baccalaureate degrees as 'Two-Year with a Bachelor's' institutions.

These conflicting definitions create difficulty when trying to categorize which states formally offer baccalaureate degrees at a community college. According to the CCBA, as of July 2005, eight states (Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, Texas, Indiana, Florida, Vermont, and Hawaii) formally offer at least one baccalaureate degree at a community college. Additionally, Arizona, California, and Illinois are currently undergoing some effort to approve the community college baccalaureate. Utilizing the university extension model, two community colleges in Arkansas and Louisiana offered the baccalaureate but have since transitioned from a two-year to a four-year institution.

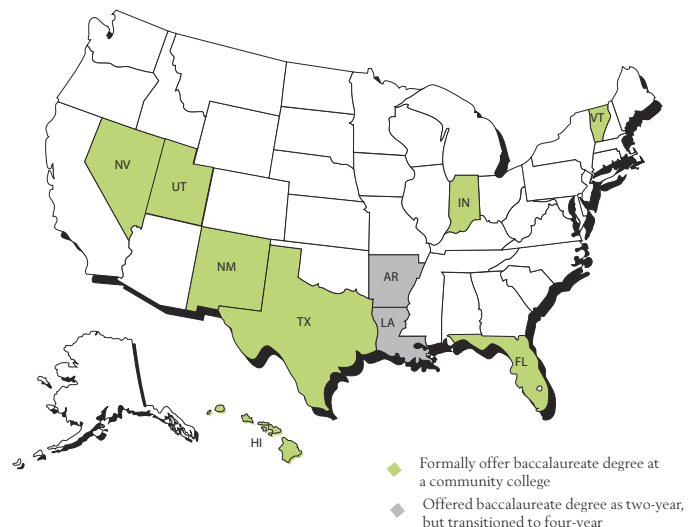
On the other hand, utilizing institutional categories as defined by SREB, both Dalton State College and Macon State College in Georgia and West Virginia University at Parkersburg are considered 'Two-Year with a Bachelor's' institutions. This category also includes the University of Arkansas at Forth Smith and according to Floyd, SREB will also be adding the four Florida Community Colleges: Chipola, Miami Dade, St. Petersburg, and Okloosa Walton. Floyd also states, "three community colleges in Texas (Brazosport College, Midland College, and South Texas Community College) were granted authorization by the Texas Coordinating Board to offer baccalaureates in certain applied technical and science fields in July 2003. In time, they will become SREB "hybrids," even though the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), their regional accrediting institution, will classify them as four-year institutions, not community colleges."

### Policy Issues

Developing a community college baccalaureate degree in teacher education raises a number of important policy issues. These include but are not limited to:

- Are community colleges that offer a baccalaureate degree considered two-year colleges, four-year institutions or does a new definition yielding to the hybrid model need to be created?
- How far are community colleges drifting from their original mission, or are they staying true to their mission by offering the baccalaureate degree?
- Can community colleges maintain the necessary level of resources, quality, and services?

Community Colleges Offering Baccalaureate Degrees



- How will these baccalaureate programs be funded? Is the community college capable of developing a cost model for offering bachelor degrees that differs markedly from the traditional cost model in four-year colleges and universities?
- How will the community college baccalaureate in teacher education or other select fields affect institutional competition for enrollment and fixed state resources?
- Will the community college baccalaureate degree be accepted as entry for graduate study and beyond by four-year institutions?
- If a state has both a community college and four-year institutional board, who should have primary decision-making responsibility on issues of program approval, funding or financial aid for community college baccalaureate programs?

## Recommendations

In its *Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology Policy Brief* series, the ECS touches upon recommendations for the community college baccalaureate degree. The following is an excerpt from their *Teacher Education Baccalaureate Degrees at Community Colleges* brief.

- **Assure quality and accreditation.** Adopt high standards and quality review processes that reflect the same expectations for quality in the community college program as those for any other teacher preparation program. Before new degree programs are created, there should be a review of the institution's ability to prepare new teachers in both subject matter and teaching skills. Teams of persons from the best programs in the state should conduct these reviews. In addition, the appropriate accrediting agencies must acknowledge and accept the change in mission.
- **Maintain community college mission.** Ensure community colleges do not change their overall role and mission upon offering BAs. Serving the community workforce needs is highly valued and should continue to be a central role.
- **Avoid duplicate programs.** Coordinate offerings among various educational institutions within the state to reduce duplication among programs. One approach is to centralize governance into a single board for approvals, making oversight easier. This also would include being selective about programs approved. Establish guidelines that only allow for programs in areas of worker shortages or areas unavailable at traditional institutions.

- **Consider geographic needs.** Determine geographic areas with most dire need of teachers. Duplicate programs may be approved when certain locations have high demand. For example, a duplicate program in a rural area may be acceptable if all other higher education institutions in the state are beyond commuting distance.
- **Provide resources for upper-division courses.** Ensure community colleges have the resources necessary to offer BA degrees, including funding for upper-division courses. State leaders will need to develop new funding formulas for community colleges that offer BAs.
- **Establish salary and workload.** Leaders must establish clearly defined salary schedules and teaching loads before approving baccalaureate degrees at community colleges. Consider changes to faculty workload and compensation. Also consider internal faculty morale and relations between those who teach lower- and upper-division courses.

- **Examine articulation from AA to BA.** Examine the relationship between a community college's programs, ensuring the BA programs build upon the AA programs. In addition, the AA degree requirements should easily fulfill prerequisites for upper-division courses.

## States with Community College Teacher Education Baccalaureate Degrees

### Nevada

In response to the need to increase student access, address local workforce needs, provide specialized training, and contribute to the economic stability in local communities, Great Basin College (GBC) began offering the Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education in 1999. GBC created a committee of teachers from various departments in the college and superintendents from local school districts, who worked together to design a four-year teacher education curriculum that maximized field experience in the local schools.

Students entering the program must complete the associate of arts in elementary education degree. They can then concentrate in language arts, math, science or social studies. The program includes technology and assessment techniques, and collaborates with five local school districts that provide students with clinical and field experience. As part of their education, they have early and frequent clinical experience and attend faculty meetings, training and other teacher activities that allow them to judge the working culture of the school.

Prior to the introduction of this program at GBC, local districts recruited candidates from outside the area. Now GBC is able to produce teacher candidates from the area who are familiar with the community and its schools.

### Florida

In 1999, Florida ranked 38th among all states and ninth among the 10-largest states in the proportion of the population with bachelor's degrees or higher. Florida also ranked behind other states in responding to workforce development issues. To counter low rankings of graduating students with Bachelor's degrees and responding to workforce development issues, the Council for Education Policy Research and Improvement, a Florida policy body, had a goal of increasing Baccalaureate degree (BA) graduates by 150,000 by a specified year. One of the strategies for achieving this goal was to authorize community colleges to offer Baccalaureate degrees on a limited basis and if the following criteria were met: there was high workforce demand and universities were not meeting that high workforce demand.

In 2001, St. Petersburg College began offering Bachelor of Science degrees in elementary education, exceptional student education, secondary education mathematics and secondary education biology. In May 2002, the Florida Board of Education approved bachelor degrees at Miami-Dade College for prospective teachers of the physically and learning disabled, through a separate school of education. Miami-Dade also requested approval for programs in early childhood and elementary school education, but the Florida Secretary of Education said there was no "critical shortage" in those areas. Most baccalaureate programs offered at community colleges in Florida are in teacher education.

### Utah

Utah Valley State College, formerly Utah Valley Community College, was approved by the board of regents and the state board of education in 1999 to offer a baccalaureate in elementary education, and has since added many other degrees. It is the fastest growing institution in the Utah's higher education system. Dixie State College, located in the far southern part of the state, has also been approved by the Utah State System of Higher Education to offer an elementary education program. In 2000, the Utah State Legislature granted a name change and baccalaureate degree status to the college.

## New Mexico

Northern New Mexico Community College (NNMCC) has traditionally had large enrollments in its associate degree program but has also had difficulty encouraging potential teachers to transfer into four-year university teacher education programs to complete their degrees. This is primarily because NMCC has a large majority of non-traditional students (average age 31) who are unable to attend a university away from home. The need for more teachers in northern New Mexico was discussed during the 2004 legislative session, and both the Senate and the House approved NNMCC's request for authorization to offer a teacher education baccalaureate.

## Quick Facts

- Community College Baccalaureate degrees are a new policy approach to dealing with teacher shortages. In 1997, Arkansas' Westark Community College became the first community college in the nation granted legislative permission to offer a baccalaureate degree on its campus.

- The Community College Baccalaureate Association was established in 1999. The CCBA is headquartered in Ft. Myers, Florida and currently has about 80 members.

- Two-thirds of community colleges in the U.S. have considered offering bachelor's degrees in some capacity, according to a study conducted by the Education Alliance, a higher-education consulting group.

- In order to gain regional accreditation, some community colleges who wish to offer BA's must drop "community" from their names because certain accreditation agencies like SACS consider an institution a four-year college once it begins to offer an upper-division program.

- The programs can be costly. The start-up cost to offer four-year degrees at Miami-Dade Community College was \$1.7 million; maintaining the program is expected to cost about \$7,000 per full-time student.

- While just a few state examples exist of bachelor-level teacher education programs at community colleges, more states have community colleges offering BAs in other subject areas. These include information technology management and business administration. States offering degrees in these areas include Utah, and Vermont.

The Center for Community College Policy

## COMMUNITY COLLEGES FORMALLY OFFERING BACCALAUREATE DEGREES AS DEFINED BY CCBA

State	Community College	Degrees Offered
1. Florida	Chipola College	BS: Secondary Mathematics Education, Secondary Science Education
	Miami Dade College	BS: Exceptional Student Education, Secondary Mathematics (6-12), Secondary Science (6-12)
	Okaloosa-Walton College	BAS: Project & Acquisitions Management
	St. Petersburg College	BSE: Elementary Education, Exceptional Student Education, Secondary Education-Mathematics, Secondary Education-Biology BSN: Nursing BAS: Dental Hygiene, Technology Management
	Daytona Beach Community College	Bachelors in Applied Science [Spring 2005]
2. Utah	Utah Valley State College (formerly Utah Valley Community College)	BS: Business Management, Criminal Justice, Hospitality Management, Paralegal Studies, Accounting, Business/Marketing Education, Computer Science, Information Technology, Multimedia Communications Technology, Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, Biology, Biology Education, Chemistry, Chemistry and Physics Education, Earth Science, Earth Science Education, Mathematics, Mathematics Education, Nursing, Physics, Behavioral Science, History BA/BS/BFA: Art and Visual Communications BA/BS: English, English Education, Philosophy, Integrated Studies BS: History Education, Aviation Professional Pilot, Public Emergency Services Management, Technology Management BAT: Bachelor of Applied Technology
	Dixie State College	BS: Business Administration, Computer and Information Technology, Elementary Education BSN: Nursing
3. Nevada	Great Basin College	BA: Elementary Education BSN: Nursing BAS: Management in Technology, Instrumentation, Land Surveying/Geomatics BAIPS: Arts and Humanities Administration, Resource Management, Social Science Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)
4. Texas	Brazosport College	BAT: Technology Management
	South Texas Community College	BAT: Technology Management
	Midland College	BAT: Technology Management
5. Vermont	Vermont Technical College	BS: Architectural Engineering Technology, Business Technology and Management, Computer Engineering Technology, Electromechanical Engineering Technology
6. Hawaii	Maui Community College	BAS: Applied Business and Information Technology
7. Indiana	Vincennes College	BS: Homeland Security and Public Safety
8. New Mexico	Northern New Mexico Community College	BA: Elementary Education and Teaching

## Alternatives

In a recently published book entitled: *The Community College Baccalaureate: Emerging Trends & Policy Issues*, authors Floyd, Skolnik and Walker indicate there are other models that expand access to the baccalaureate. "Among these models are community colleges that confer these degrees and partner with others to provide the "net effect" of a baccalaureate degree experience for community college graduates. Much like the 1960s, this is an era of innovation: Community colleges are changing rapidly as an increasing number of them strive to "make good" on their promise of access by implementing diverse (and sometimes controversial) models of baccalaureate programming."

### Articulation Model

The transfer function is a key role of community colleges. Articulation agreements that guarantee acceptance of freshmen and sophomore credits by four-year institutions are vital to this transfer function. In some states, students who complete a prescribed general-education core are guaranteed acceptance of credits and junior status at state institutions. With respect to teacher education, recent studies report that almost 80% of U.S. community colleges are implementing these types of articulation agreements. Although this model works well for some students, for others it is not feasible, as it requires travel to a four-year institution for degree completion.

### University Center Model

One of the fastest growing models for providing baccalaureate access at the community college is with the creation of a University Center, where baccalaureate and graduate degree programs are offered on the community college campus by four-year college and university providers. Such four-year and graduate degree programs are closely aligned with the associate degree programs offered at the community college, allowing for a seamless transition for students. With this model, students benefit from having a broad range of offerings located in a convenient location, however they are dependent upon the university to offer and schedule the courses.

### University Extension Model

The University Extension Model is similar to the University Center Model in that baccalaureate courses are offered at a campus other than the main or largest campus at the university. The difference is that the campus in which the courses are offered is formally part of the university.

Some colleges use their university affiliation in their name, even though they have their own independent accreditation. For example, Westark Community College in Arkansas became University of Arkansas at Fort Smith in 2002 after offering baccalaureate degrees for a number of years. Although this model potentially offers seamless opportunities, programs such as teacher education are not commonly offered through this method.

## Resources

### Access to the Baccalaureate Initiative

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) partnered together in an initiative to help more students continue their higher education and earn a bachelors degree. <http://www.pathtocollege.org>

### American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)

Members of the AASCU work to extend higher education to all citizens. [www.aascu.org](http://www.aascu.org)

### Community College Baccalaureate Association (CCBA)

The CCBA strives to promote better access to the baccalaureate degree on community college campuses, and to serve as a resource for information on various models for accomplishing this purpose. [www.accbd.org](http://www.accbd.org)

### The Center for Community College Policy, Teacher Preparation Policy Toolkit

This toolkit was designed to provide policymakers and practitioners with the information, tools and guidance necessary to develop informed policies to increase community colleges' involvement in teacher preparation. [www.communitycollegepolicy.org/default.asp](http://www.communitycollegepolicy.org/default.asp)

### Education Commission of the States (ECS)

ECS keeps policymakers on the leading edge of what's happening in the states by gathering, analyzing and disseminating information about current and emerging issues, trends, and innovations in state education policy. [www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org)

### The National Centers for Career and Technical Education

NCCTE is committed to providing innovative approaches to improving the practice of career and technical education at the local, state, and national levels leading to improved learner achievement. [www.nccte.org](http://www.nccte.org)

### National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

Promotes public policies that enhance Americans' opportunities to pursue and achieve high-quality education and training beyond high school. [www.highereducationcouncil.org](http://www.highereducationcouncil.org)

### Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)

SREB is the nation's first interstate compact for education, founded in 1948. With 16 member states, SREB works to achieve 12 Challenge to Lead Goals for education in the region. <http://www.sreb.org>

## U.S. REGIONAL ACCREDITING ASSOCIATIONS

These accrediting associations are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and accredit entire institutions (as opposed to individual programs) in the U.S. and abroad:

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSA)  
Accredits colleges, universities, and other institutions in Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Central America, Europe, and the Middle East. [www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org)

New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)  
Accredits colleges, universities, and other institutions in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. [www.neasc.org](http://www.neasc.org)

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA)  
Accredits colleges, universities, and other institutions in Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Navajo Nation, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and international locations of accredited members. [www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org](http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org)

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)  
Accredits colleges, universities, and other institutions in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. [www.nwccu.org](http://www.nwccu.org)

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)  
Accredits colleges, universities, and other institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Latin America. [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org)

Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)  
Accredits colleges, universities, and other institutions in California, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Palau, Micronesia, Northern Marianas, Marshall Islands, and other Australasian locations. [www.wascweb.org](http://www.wascweb.org)

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